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looks in detail at Zola's copious preparatory notes, identifying the real-life people, places, and events reused by Zola. This transformation of history into fiction is revealed as an essential part of Zola's creative process. Mitterand then considers the impact of each novel on the (Parisian) public as well as charting the (sometimes surprising) reactions of friends and colleagues. Mitterand is especially interested in the impact of the novels' reception on their author. The degree of empathy he shows with Zola is rare and the study is all the more compelling for this. He not only recounts Zola's reactions, he tries to understand and interpret them. Although Zola is best remembered for his *Rougon-Macquart* novels, Mitterand's careful charting of all his activities reveals that the novels took up a surprisingly small percentage of his time. Zola's journalism (both political and literary), theatre adaptations, and reviews are examined in detail. Mitterand is not afraid to discuss the most intimate details of Zola's private life. His relationships with his wife, his mistress, and their two children are evoked at length (although at times Mitterand's speculations border on the intrusive). By concentrating on the minutiae of Zola's existence, Mitterand provides both a biographical account and a history of an albeit untypical late nineteenth-century existence where domestic arrangements such as the payment of bills took up more time than might have been expected. Mitterand's prose is as rich in detail as Zola's novels. Indeed, Mitterand's approach has much in common with that of his subject. The work is always meticulously researched and cross-referenced. To this end Mitterand relies heavily on letters, both to and from Zola, many of which are quoted at length in the text. Although Zola is always and uncompromisingly the focus of the study, Mitterand's sustained examination of his relations with his contemporaries (Edmond de Goncourt, Flaubert, Maupassant, Cézanne, to name but the most frequently discussed) turns a single-author study into a detailed account of the literary and cultural climate of the time. In addition, Zola's journalistic interest in politics, especially in the 1870s, means that his intimate history is set alongside France's post-Commune collective history. Although the amount of historical knowledge assumed might pose a problem to the non-specialist reader, Mitterand's insightful comparisons (between the Commune and the Occupation; between historic and modern Paris) encourage the reader to consider Zola's life and work in a wider historical and literary context. Mitterand is understandably one of Zola's biggest fans and he makes no secret of his partiality. Readers should not expect an impersonal catalogue of dates and events. Instead they will be treated to a sensitive and at times impassioned account of the life of one of the nineteenth century's most influential, and controversial, figures.

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HANNAH THOMPSON

L'Ironie naturaliste: Zola et les paradoxes du sérieux. By MARIE-ANGE VOISIN-FOUGÈRE. (Romantisme et Modernités, 40) Paris: Champion. 2001. 271 pp. €53.35. ISBN 2-7453-0378-3.

This book aims to challenge the perception of *Les Rougon-Macquart* as earnest documentation of essentially serious subject matter. Rather, seriousness, and the supposedly transparent objectivity of its representation, are central to an ironic narrative mask adopted by Zola to expose 'la gravité affectée [. . .] de la société du Second Empire' (p. 11). An 'avant-propos théorique', in the form of a concise exposition of theories of irony ancient and modern, suggests that the approach to irony appropriate to the *Rougon-Macquart* is a citational one, focusing on unflagged references to existing discourses. In this the study is welcome, in that it necessarily recognizes the polyphony of Zola's fiction, and emphasizes the routinely ignored yet crucial distance between author and narrator. The author, further, in being distanced from the narrative, is also distanced from the discourses voiced within it. Perhaps surprisingly,

the first of the work's three main sections begins with a 'détour biographique' examining Zola's attitudes to humour, irony, and the seriousness of mimetic discourse; of interest here from a textual perspective is the idea of Zola's fiction as parody of the excessively serious naturalist author. Indeed, the ironizing and ironized naturalist author and narrator are characters, just as characters subsequently examined in this section are themselves ironists, inscribed in an intertextual metalanguage subverting precisely 'le sérieux', which is 'la valeur-clé de l'idéologie bourgeoise' (p. 86). The *texte-clé* used as illustration in the next section (and throughout) is, appropriately, *Pot-Bouille*, where the outward gravity of the 'maison' is subverted by the behaviour of the inhabitants for whom it functions metonymically. Voisin-Fougère systematically examines this novel in terms of its manifestation of each element of an extensive taxonomy of irony, consisting of antiphrasis, emphasis, comparison, metaphor, oxymoron, *mise en abyme*, paralipsis, euphemism, asyndeton, and parataxis, among other 'indices figuratifs' and strategies of ironic silence and dissimulated authorial presence. This analysis is followed by two case studies examining, respectively, external focalization in *La Conquête de Plassans* and contradictory juxtaposition in *La Débâcle*. The final section deals with theatrical metaphor in *Les Rougon-Macquart*, identifying the bourgeois as archetypal *hypocritès* in the *comédie sociale*, and naturalist fiction as the ideal dramaturgical means of exposing the farcical and immoral reality lurking behind his 'sérieux'. One criticism to be made is that the work comes across itself as rather earnest and over-systematic: but therein lies, perhaps, in the manner of the theme in hand, subtle ironization of the 'sérieux' of academic criticism.

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LARRY DUFFY

Bloy et la communication dans 'l'enfer des médias'. Ed. by PASCAL DURAND. (Revue des Lettres Modernes, Léon Bloy 5) Paris: Lettres Modernes Minard. 2001. 282 pp. €22.11. ISBN 2-256-91030-X.

Bloy's relationship with the media was predictably ambivalent: the self-appointed 'exégète des lieux communs' and satirist of 'Cochons-sur-Marne' simultaneously needed the press and despised its core business, its readers' appetite for 'news'. 'Trop furieusement catholique' for his co-religionists, he needed a forum for his anti-Establishment and anti-Republican views. The vagaries of that relationship, judiciously encapsulated in an *étude liminaire* by Pascal Durand ('Babel Enfer'), are revisited here in a clutch of suggestive studies which, with a rediscovered review of *Sueur de Sang* by Jaurès, and the series-standard 'carnet critique', should appeal both to a specialist and to a wider scholarly readership. Thomas Loué analyses the 'logique contre-institutionnelle' (p. 52) of the periodicals with which Bloy was successively aligned, from his own short-lived creation *Le Pal* (1885) to the *Mercur de France*, *L'Univers*, and *La Revue blanche*. Gilles Negrello, Olivier Macaux, and Pierre Glaudes examine parallels between 'écriture journalistique et écriture romanesque', 'communication et communion' in *Le Désespéré*, and 'le journal' and 'les journaux' respectively. Alongside the striking thematic consanguinity of the provincial *illuminé* and major figures of *fin-de-siècle* Decadence, some familiar suspects emerge: the 'République des vaincus'; the 'putanat' of official clerisy from Hugo to Zola (the Dreyfus affair is both subtext and overt preoccupation); colonialism rationalized as civilizing mission; and fashionable new technologies including the bicycle, the telephone, the Eiffel tower ('Babel de fer'), and aviation. Photography was a site of particular negativity (pun intended), partly from personal mortification—Bloy's likeness to the naturalist 'cretin' de Goncourt and the anticlerical Rochefort foreshadows his disciple Bernanos's 'Hélas! je ressemble à Claudel!' (1926)—but more profoundly because reproduction-as-creation usurped